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TO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0000  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0000  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 0000  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 120975

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE: REMARKS FOR QUARTERLY MNF-I BRIEF TO  
UNSC

USUN should draw from the following remarks in briefing  
the UNSC on behalf of the MNF-I, November 14, 2008:

11. Begin Text: I am pleased to report to the Security Council  
on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I). I would  
like to begin by thanking Special Representative de Mistura  
for his briefing on the important work undertaken by the  
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). UNAMI's  
work is critical to cementing the gains we have seen in Iraq  
and I wish to extend our appreciation for their hard work and  
sacrifices. We remain committed to ensuring that the United  
Nations receives the support necessary for it to sustain and  
expand its presence in Iraq.

This has been a year of significant achievement for which  
the Iraqi government, the Iraqi people, and the  
international community can take pride. Yet work remains  
to be done. Progress in Iraq is fragile and reversible.  
It is critical that Iraq receive the continued support and  
encouragement of the international community as it faces  
the next set of challenges in rebuilding its country:  
legitimate and peaceful provincial, district, and national  
elections in 2009; restoring essential services for its  
people; humanitarian efforts to support the return of 4  
million refugees and internally displaced persons;  
peaceful resolution on the status of disputed internal  
boundaries, most notably Kirkuk; and constitutional  
review.

Today, I would like to update you on several points of key  
progress that have been achieved.

First, let me address the ongoing improvement in the  
overall security situation in Iraq.

The security situation has significantly improved since  
June 2007. The number of overall attacks has decreased  
by 86 percent, civilian deaths due to violence have  
decreased by 80 percent, Iraqi Security Force (ISF) deaths  
have decreased 84 percent, U.S. military deaths in Iraq  
have decreased 87 percent, coalition military deaths in  
Iraq have decreased by 88 percent, and Ethno-sectarian  
deaths have decreased by 95 percent. Coalition and Iraqi  
Security Forces have degraded al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and  
militia groups' capabilities as evidenced by the 81 percent  
decrease in Improvised Explosive Device explosions and  
the 72 percent decrease in suicide explosions.

A reduction in violence across northern Iraq can be  
attributed in part to the removal and displacement of key  
AQI leaders as a result of Iraqi-led security operations.  
But some political and factional tensions still remain  
that have affected the delivery of services. The  
Government of Iraq, with Coalition assistance, has begun  
addressing the complex underlying ethnic and religious  
tensions that lead to violence by ensuring adherence to

the rule of law and by establishing reconstruction operation centers to bring much-needed essential services and economic investment.

Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces have maintained these security gains even with the reduction of Coalition forces to pre-surge levels. Joint operations, in concert with the Awakening movement, have improved the security situation such that, even as a number of Coalition countries depart theater, the United States has announced the early withdrawal of the Second Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division from Baghdad -- bringing the number of Brigade Combat Teams to below pre-surge levels.

On-going security operations have produced encouraging results, with arrests of significant AQI targets in Diyala, Mosul, and Baghdad, as well as leaders of other armed groups in Baghdad, Basrah, Maysan, and Wasit. The Iraqi people's increasing trust of the Iraqi Security Forces has also led to a number of record-breaking seizures of weapons caches, including several hundred IEDs in the Mada'in area and two tons of explosives in Ninewa.

Primarily as a result of successful operations against AQI facilitation and support networks inside of Iraq, we are also beginning to see a decrease in the number of foreign fighters crossing into Iraq --roughly a fifty percent decrease compared to 2007.

-- Nevertheless, we remain concerned by the flow of foreign fighters and lethal aid into Iraq. Syria remains the primary gateway for foreign terrorists moving into Iraq and has taken insufficient action to combat the terrorist facilitation networks based in Syria. Additional efforts are needed.

For all this progress, al Qaeda in Iraq remains a significant threat, as do Iranian surrogate militants and JAM. All retain the intent and capability of carrying out lethal attacks against the Iraqi people, such as the multiple bombings that occurred this week. AQI's use of person-borne improvised explosive devices and increasing shift toward female suicide bombers remain a particular challenge. More broadly, Iranian efforts to interfere in the Iraqi political process continue to frustrate reconciliation efforts and political developments inside of Iraq. We are uncertain that Iran is committed to a peaceful and stable neighbor in Iraq, but more interested in exercising a veto on the future of the Iraqi people.

In countering the continued extremist threat, the increased capability of the Iraqi Security Forces has substantially improved the overall security environment. More than 601,000 personnel now serve in the ISF -- an increase of over 21,000 personnel since our last report to you in August.

There are now 165 Iraqi Army combat battalions conducting operations, an increase of 4 Iraqi Army combat battalions since our last report. Nearly 70 percent or 115 of these Iraqi Army combat battalions are assessed to be "in the lead" for operations.

The expansion of the Air Force and the Navy lags behind that of the Army. There's nothing surprising about this given the technical platforms that the Air Force must acquire and learn to sustain. While the Air Force and the Navy possess limited capabilities, comprehensive force development strategies are being implemented.

The Air Force is now flying around 350 sorties a week and playing an increasingly active counterinsurgency role, flying surveillance and reconnaissance missions in support of the Iraqi Security Forces, and providing important logistics support with their mobility aircraft. Next year, we expect the first precision air-to-ground attack capability to be fielded with Cessna 208 Caravans fitted with Hellfire missiles. The Iraqi Air Force recently

graduated its first initial entry pilots who are now flying, and there are many more to follow.

The Navy is conducting three times as many patrols as it did last year, with increasing amounts of boarding and searching of vessels coming into Iraqi territorial waters in the Northern Arabian Gulf. The Navy has just taken delivery of the first six of 26 modern patrol craft and is expecting the delivery of four large patrol ships from Italy in 2009.

The recent announcement by the Government of Iraq to purchase C-130 transport aircraft and armed reconnaissance helicopters also marks a significant step toward self-sufficiency.

The National Police also continue to increase their effectiveness and are now staffed at over 41,000 personnel. The police continue to stress better ethno-sectarian balance within the force both through recruiting and assignments.

Next, I would like to provide an update on the Coalition role.

In September, on the margins of the UN General Assembly, President Talabani noted with thanks the role of those countries that have contributed to the Coalition and NATO Training Mission - Iraq. Currently, Coalition members other than the United States contribute over 6,000 forces to the Multi-National Force and some 300 personnel to UNAMI. Since our last briefing, approximately 3,000 Coalition personnel departed theater and others will return home soon. At the same time, continued political and economic support by the Coalition and the international community will remain critical to the success of Iraqi efforts to build a stable and secure country.

MNF-I is continuing to progressively transfer responsibility for security to the Government of Iraq. This process of transitioning security responsibilities to the ISF is increasingly being led by Iraqi officials. Thirteen out of 18 provinces are now under provincial Iraqi control. Anbar Province -- once a stronghold of AQI -- transitioned on September 1st, Babil Province transitioned on October 23rd, and Wasit Province transitioned on October 29th. A joint coalition - Iraqi effort is anticipated to assess conditions in and facilitate transition of the remaining provinces: Salah ad Din, Ta'mim, Diyala, and Ninewa within the next several months, culminating with the planned transfer of security authority for Baghdad in June 2009.

The improvement in security has helped to foster political reconciliation. Since our last report, the Iraqi Council of Representatives unanimously passed a Provincial Elections Law that will provide for local elections in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces early next year. The provincial elections are a major step toward political stabilization. Sunnis who boycotted the 2005 provincial elections will compete for political power in the provinces that once were the heartland of the insurgency.

UNAMI also remains deeply engaged in elections preparation. Indeed, UNAMI's work with the Iraqi government proved critical in achieving this Elections Law. We commend UNAMI's plans to expand its footprint in Iraq and will dedicate ourselves to providing assistance as necessary so that UNAMI can continue to assist the Iraqi government with other critical issues, such as the relocation and reintegration of Iraqi refugees and the internally displaced. We strongly support the construction of the proposed UN compound in Baghdad and commend the Government of Iraq on its initial pledge of 25 million dollars so that planning for this facility may proceed.

UNAMI is heavily involved in negotiating the disputed internal

boundaries between the KRG and the Government of Iraq. It issued a first set of recommendations in June and its next recommendation will set the state for a resolution of Kirkuk and the other disputed territories, a key step in creating stability for all of Iraq.

Iraq has made significant diplomatic gains, with most of the countries in the region normalizing their diplomatic presence in Baghdad. Since our last report, Syria and the Arab League have joined Iraq's other neighbors in naming ambassadors to Iraq -- and many of these ambassadors are now on the ground in Baghdad. Other neighbors, including the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, have sent high-level delegations to Baghdad. We encourage others in the region to follow their example.

Finally, I want to highlight that negotiations continue between the United States and the Iraqi government on our transitioning relationship, with a goal of a strong and strategic relationship with Iraq, which respects both countries' sovereignty and serves both countries' interests.

Mr. President, the report of the Secretary-General, which is before the Security Council today, highlights the sustainable progress that has been achieved by the Iraqi Government, with the assistance of the United Nations and the support of the MNF-I and Iraqi Security Forces. The international community supports a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal, and unified Iraq, and I call upon all parties to renew their commitment to assist the Government of Iraq in continuing the hard work to overcome the many challenges that remain.

Thank you Mr. President.  
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